

JORDAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT II (JTD II)

DEVELOP COOPERATIVE HOTEL MARKETING CAPACITY IN JORDAN JULY 2009 FINAL

July 2009

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Chemonics International Inc.

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3112 DEVELOP COOPERATIVE HOTEL MARKETING CAPACITY IN JORDAN

GBTI Contract No. EPP-I-00-06-00013-00 Task Order No. EPP-I-02-06-00013-00

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ACRONYMS

ASEZA Agaba Special Economic Zone Authority

BDS Business Development Service CBO Community-Based Organization

COM Council of Ministers

DCA Development Credit Authority
DOA Department of Antiquities
GAM Greater Amman Municipality

HRDC Human Resource Development Corporation
IBLAW International Business Legal Advisors
ILO International Labor Organization

IR Intermediate Result
IT Information Technology

JHTEC Jordan Hospitality and Tourism Education Company

JITOA Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association

JOHUD Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development

JRA Jordan Restaurant Association
JRF Jordan River Foundation
JTB Jordan Tourism Board
MFI Micro-Finance Institution

MOL Ministry of Labor

MOU Memorandum of Understanding
MOTA Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
MTA Madaba Tourism Association
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
NTS National Tourism Strategy
NTVS National Tourism Visitors Survey

NTVS National Tourism Visitors Survey
PDG Program Development Grant
PSP Private Sector Participation

RFP Request for Proposal

RSCN Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature

SME Small and Medium Enterprises SSC Strategy Steering Committee TDC Tourism Development Corporation

TOR Terms of Reference

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

USAID United States Agency for International Development

VTC Vocational Training Center

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USAID/Jordan Tourism Development Project II (JTP II) has identified the need to assist the small, non branded hotels of Jordan to establish a co-op marketing consortium so as to enhance their capacity to market directly and collectively to global markets. These hotels presently have very limited marketing capability and consequently suffer from reduced occupancy levels over extended periods of the year. Transforming their direct marketing capability or engaging effectively in low season marketing using e-marketing represent particular challenges that these hotels are unlikely to overcome as individual operators or without special enabling and empowering actions by JTP II.

A feasibility project to establish the level of interest, viability and scope of the project was therefore undertaken consisting of three component parts:-

Part 1 Sets out the results from the consultation process and survey of small candidate hotels throughout Jordan to gather information directly from the hotel owners and operators, the travel trade professionals as well as the governing hospitality bodies. This process and the collective data it yielded has informed the process and recommendations made. It confirmed that the interest level and desire is there to form a new marketing consortium owned and operated by the small hotel members is high. A theme/or brand for the hotels within the marketing consortium is recommended but remains to be determined and agreed during the formation process. The marketing tools that were considered to best suit the needs of the small independent hotels is centered on a collective high quality website with a good range of functionality including a booking and feedback mechanism. The Jordan Hotel Association (JHA) and Jordan Incoming Tour Operators Association (JITOA) were recommended as two bodies that could actively support the creation and establishment of the marketing consortium. According to most hotels and travel trade professionals consulted, the co-op marketing consortium was widely praised as a solution for the small hotels of Jordan to broaden their market exposure, generate incremental revenue, assist in finding customers for low season and compete on an international and domestic level. The business model through which this can be achieved is set out in the report.

Part 2 Looks at the environment and business context for this type of project, the structures and key institutions in the tourism framework, the opportunities for The Small Hotels of Jordan group, and the emerging global trends including the development of "boutique" type hotels

Part 3 Sets out the case for an e-marketing solution as the most effective low cost method of reaching global markets. It recommends that the group form a viable entity as soon as possible after formation later when success has been achieved a company entity can be considered in which the member hotels would be shareholders with an elected governance board. It goes on to demonstrate how the new "Small Hotels of Jordan" group might be formed, structured and funded as well as illustrating in some detail how the recommended web site might be established with the appropriate level of functionality, tools and services to meet modern e-marketing requirements..

It is clear that this solution can only come to fruition within a context where it is supported by USAID through JTP II in the start up and formative period estimated to be a minimum of three years. The creation and structuring of the group will take over a year to complete. This will be followed by the recruitment of professional staff and the formal launch of operations. The assistance needed will be in the form of a matching grant over the three year period as well as technical assistance and mentoring support to cover the various stages of formation which would continue for some time albeit at a reduced level to allow the entity to establish itself properly and roll out its services.

Background & Challenge

There are 470 hotels in Jordan*. Twenty three are members of international brand groups in 5* and 4* classification. Very few of the remainder are members of local, international or themed marketing groups. Most hotels are small with room numbers varying between 45 to 75 and in term of resources and capabilities lack the 'critical mass' and viability to market themselves effectively internationally. They also lack the resources, knowledge and expertise in getting their product to the market particularly in using the full suite of tools now available through the web. Few are members of either international or local cooperative marketing groups and too few have a presence on the major international marketing and booking sites such as Expedia and Hotels.com.

While the world-wide web and internet has provided the means for all premises to reach global markets relatively inexpensively and cost effectively, it is not as effective for individual hotels as it is for branded and themed groups. The reason is that the branded approach offers security and creditability to the visitor who can be assured of the quality attainment of the premises whatever the country or region. Brands have the capacity and capability to build sophisticated sites where as individual hotels lack the economies of scale, resources, knowledge and skills to make significant impact in the competitive marketplace. Even those that have created web sites do not use them to established best practice standards. Therefore it makes good commercial and business sense for a group of LIKE and/or THEMED hotels to come together for marketing purposes where their combined scale can add weight to their efforts and enable them to employ resources more effectively in a cooperative approach.

*Jordan Hotel Association figures, including unclassified hotels and apartment/suites.

The USAID Jordan Tourism Development Project II has been requested to carry out detailed consultation and research to inform the development of the concept of a co-op marketing company owned and operated by a new marketing group drawn from the small hotel owners of Jordan.

The objective purpose was to investigate a selected group of typical small and family hotels to establish their interest in forming a 'co-op marketing company that would be owned, operated and managed by the hotels involved. This is an ideal concept for hoteliers seeking to broaden their exposure, generate incremental revenue and compete more effectively on the global, regional and even domestic level. Every hotel was selected and treated on an individual basis. The co-op marketing group is envisaged as a partnership with each hotel member developing a customized strategy that suits its location and its business needs, with one clear objective – to make the hotel more successful through better marketing and more creative promotion.

PART 1. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

A comprehensive study and consultation was completed with independent (non-branded) hotels from Amman, Madaba, Petra and Aqaba. The four key sites were chosen because of the demand at these locations and the availability of clusters of sleeping rooms. The 1 to 4 star hotels were randomly selected based on the following criteria:

- Strategic location near a popular site or city center.
- Easy access to Queen Alia International Airport or any other points of entry to Jordan.
- Stand alone hotels that were not Non branded- or brand affiliated,
- Under 100 sleeping rooms in size.
- Full or minimal hotel amenities.
- Member of the Jordan Hotel Association.

The Small Hotels of Jordan

The hotels of Jordan all have their own individual style, charm, structure, and amenities. Many hotels are family owned and operated from under 20 sleeping rooms to over 100. Some hotels are located in key destinations and others off the beaten track.

Once the co-op marketing company becomes established as an entity the members will debate and decide on the choice of name that they consider best suites the company's mission statement and objectives. For the purpose of this study the Hotels will be classified as The Small Hotels of Jordan or SHJ as a working title. During the interview process the following potential names were suggested:-

- The Small Hotels of Jordan.
- Family Run Hotels of Jordan.
- Unique Hotels of Jordan.
- Lifestyle Hotels of Jordan
- Family Owned Hotels in Jordan
- Private Hotels of Jordan
- Budget Hotels of Jordan

The Challenges Facing the Small Hotels of Jordan

The research process reached out to consult with hotels in Madaba, Amman, Agaba and Petra as follows:-

The Madaba Developing Centre

Madaba has been identified as a developing centre attracting visitors to its religious sites as well as for adventure and its archeological heritage. There are multiple hotels in Madaba none of which are members of international brands or have a 5 star status. Madaba is a popular destination for travelers and is approx a convenient 30 minute drive from Amman. Traditionally it also been a day excursion for tour groups s and individuals based in the capital. The hotels in Madaba are actively selling Madaba as a destination alternative to the 'big city'. Madaba is also close to QAIA, it is less expensive than Amman and easily accessible to the other key sites in of Jordan offering day tours and car/driver service.

The Madaba Inn is in an ideal location and it is part of the Grand Hotel Group and currently would not be a candidate under the criteria for this project. The Grand Hotel Group have their own reservation and marketing entity.

A suggested group of hotels located in the Madaba area were interviewed. The hotels are owned and operated by the Twal Family who have been in the hotel industry for several years. An additional hotel to consider is the Mosaic Hotel owned by the Twal family and marketed on line.

The Season

The travel season in Madaba is very similar to the "Season for most of Jordan: High Season starting in March and running until the end of May and September through to November, plus the last 2 weeks of December. The Low Season is the summer months and Ramadan. Many of the hotels implement a price promotion during the slow season so as to try and keep a steady occupancy. A few hotels do rely on the local market with day visitor use of their facilities. The Madaba hotels are targeting the Gulf Market to promote and sell their hotels. The average stay was given as 3 nights.

The hotels receive close to 50% of their business from Tour Operators and Travel Agents, primarily inbound from Western European and the North American markets. All use multiple Tour Operators vs. a single Operator. Hotels would like to see less group travel and more FIT.business All expressed an interest in attending Trade Shows and Consumer Fairs.

Many of the Madaba hotels are actively promoting themselves on their own website with a booking mechanism, accepting credit cards and providing confirmation. The same hotels are using 3rd party travel sites like Bookings.com and Expedia.. Combined E-marketing business is close to 20% which while below global averages is a good start

The hotels do have a brochure and website featuring their hotels and amenities but it is not up to high modern standards. They agreed that the concept of 'pooling' their marketing effort to create a professional brochure and website made economic sense.

Common Theme: Family owned and operated Hotels with hands on Management.

The Outcome of Madaba

The hotels were in agreement to move to the next step, though expressed some hesitation without the full knowledge of what joining the co-op marketing would entail. The newer hotels were the visionaries and most active supporters of the concept of the collectively 'pooling' their resources, knowledge, and efforts. This could reflect the lower occupancy vs. that of the well established hotels.

The key hotels for Madaba are the Family run business hotels owned and operated by the Twal Family. Collectively marketing and selling the hotels would be an ideal progression with a strong basis of support. The 1* star Moab Land Hotel owned and operated by the Halasa Family, is ideally located though offers limited services and resources. There is a sense of isolation in Madaba from the institutional entities like The Jordan Tourism Board and The Jordan Hotel Association. Most hotels believe that if Madaba is marketed as a destination by the JTB and JHA that the hotel bookings will follow. Many hotels expressed a desire to work with the Madaba Visitor Association and to obtain its endorsement for the hotels of Madaba.

With a growing number of hotels in Madaba, the need is present for the small historic and unique family

Amman, the Capital and Major Centre

owned hotels to differentiate themselves.

Amman, the capital of Jordan continues to be the main point of entry for Group and Individual travelers coming to Jordan. Most of the 4 and 5 star brand hotels are located in the capital and there are more in the pipeline. The Jordan Hotel Association and Jordan Tourism Board are also located in Amman. The city of Amman is the focal city for business and diplomatic activity and is Jordan's major destination with the main tourism gateway at Queen Alia International airport.

A wide scope of hotels were selected, from older and established businesses to the modern and sophisticated The older, established hotels had concerns that the 'other hotels' may or may not share the same 'hospitality' visions or views, while the new hotels were concerned with quality assurance and standards.

The newer modern hotels opening in Amman were the most supportive of the concept of collectively working together. These hotels were owned and operated by investors who also manage their properties. The owners have worked and lived outside of Jordan and have brought new ideas and concepts with interesting design and décor. The new, up and coming hotels are concerned that the 'older other hotels' would not be up to their standards and/or quality assurance.

Both new and established hotels had no comprehensive strategies or plans in place to proactively market and sell themselves during the slow and low season. Many hotels sit and wait for the tour operators to bring in the business. A few 3 and 4 star hotels have come together to discuss strategies to further improve their business during these economic challenging times under the supervision of the Jordan Hotel Association.

Many hotels would like to be more involved with the policies and procedures of the Jordan Hotel Association and creation and implementation of marketing strategies with the Jordan Tourism Board that would attract the customer 'type' to their hotels. They were supportive of the idea of going to Trade Shows and Trade Fairs and do understand the benefits of the economies of scale as a group.

A few hotels have given themselves a "boutique" theme and market themselves accordingly. The Boutique hotel theme is used by a few hotels that do not accurately comply with international standards and this may hurt the hotels involved in the long run.

All hotels except the Hisham Hotel located in Jabal Amman and Capri Hotel in Um Ethana expressed a keen interest to move to the next step with the co-op marketing concept. The Hisham Hotel inventory of sleeping rooms is under 20, and has a steady occupancy. The Capri Hotel has a steady occupancy with a sales office in the Gulf that markets their hotel year round.

The Season

The hotels high season is March to May and September to November with the last 2 weeks of December. The low season is the summer months, and January and February. The Red Rose Hotel and Turino Hotel gave opposite views to the norm of Jordan. Their high season was mostly the summer months. This may be accounted for by the Arab Gulf business in the summer months.

The travelers visiting the Amman hotels are multi-national from the Americas, European and Arab Countries.

Common Themes: City Hotels; Historically Located Hotels; Modern Hotels.

The Outcome of Amman

A common consensus amongst the hotels is that they all need and want additional marketing and support from the Jordan Tourism Board and Jordan Hotel Association. Many implied that 5 star hotels in Jordan get all the attention, support and recognition of the Jordan Tourism Board and Jordan Hotel Association, and the 4 and below stars hotels receive little or no support.

Many of the Amman hotels do understand the concept of joining a co-op marketing company. A few hotels had the following concerns:

- Most hotels do understand the success of the company will come from a professionally managed and run entity
- Many hotels do understand that the new concept entails taking financial responsibility. It was suggested that proceeds from their marketing budget could be allocated to the new marketing company.
- Most hotels would appreciate structural guidelines, technical support, and financial assistance from USAID.
- Many are savvy and do understand that 'pooling' their money does go farther
- Many expressed the desire to attend Trade Shows and Consumer Fairs
- Many Amman hotels are eager to move to the next step associated with the co-op marketing company.
 They understand that travelers are looking for added value to a destination and their stay in Jordan.
 They are aware that travelers are more demanding and are expecting internationally recognized

amenities: wireless, espresso and cappuccino machines, payment by credit cards, car/driver and taxi services, satellite TV, in the hotels.

Agaba - The Red Sea Destination

Aqaba is a destination that currently needs additional marketing. Several hotels contributed to the study all wanting the same end result - increased occupancy and sustainability.

There are several international 4 and 5 star brand hotels with their marketing mechanism in place but these hotels were excluded from the study.

Destination Aqaba report shows that there is an urgent need to build the Aqaba brand as an attractive destination for employment, lifestyle, investment and tourism. Most agreed that putting a strong sales campaign in place is necessary to increase room occupancy and revenue.

The consultation and study included several city hotels and one coastal hotel to discuss the concept of a collective website with other similar type hotels throughout Jordan. The need and desire to create, manage and execute a collective website with a booking and review mechanism was well received though there was some hesitation on what the website and other components will entail. All hotels expressed the importance of the support of USAID to start the process with assistance in the set up, business planning and technical guidance.

The hotels all agreed on the need for additional marketing for Aqaba. While Aqaba is supportive of marketing in a stand alone way, hotels in Aqaba do not have a strong active relationship with other marketing entities such as the Jordan Tourism Board and Jordan Hotel Association.

Many hotels stated that occupancy has declined for the last several years, though 2008 did increase occupancy resulting from a stronger economy and the resulting publicity from Petra's achievement of "World Wonder" status.

The small city hotels have a significant problem as there is no beach access for the 1 to 4 star hotels, thus it is very difficult to sell the destination as a beach resort.

A suggestion made was that the hotels should work together to promote their destination with a collective effort to establish a beach access. The hotels could work together to manage and maintain their beach and could offer concession stands with food, beverages and services; and a 'housekeeping service' to keep the beaches clean.

The Season

The hotel high season is March to May and September to November. The low season is the summer months, and January and February. The travelers visiting the Aqaba hotels are multi-national from the Americas, European and Arab Countries. Very few hotels had a marketing strategy prepared for the slow and low seasons.

Tour Operator Challenges affecting Agaba.

Aqaba is sold as a more expensive destination than other parts of Jordan because of the higher operating cost and taxes.

Tour operators prioritize the selling of other destinations on the Red Sea because their margins are greater than the margins in Aqaba. Aqaba's challenges are to produce attractive and affordable rates that can outsell Sham El Shak, Taba and other resorts on the Red Sea Coast in terms of value. This price competition and the reduction of additional marketing support is hurting Aqaba as a destination. Tour operators sell other destinations Tax Free, while selling Jordan, a 16% tax is added – this is a significant pricing challenge for Aqaba.

Common Theme: City Hotels located in a Sea Side Town

ASEZA

The consultants met with the Marketing and Tourism Director of ASEZA to discuss the idea of creating a 'collective website for SHJ. The concept of a fresh approach and green-field potential with good functionality for the collective website was seen as very important for its success. A suggestion was to

market the hotels in Aqaba as, 'family owned and operated with a human touch, a pleasant and inviting atmosphere where the traveler feels safe and secure.

Many hotels are not on the beach and have no beach access. However the 3 star hotels in El Guiana who were not on the beach work together to bus their hotel clients to a beach access area in another part of the town. Working together the hotels did not lose their beach clients. The director also quoted from personal experiences in Greece how small hotels can customize and personalize services that make visitors fell valued and appreciated. It was felt that with training this was something that the Jordan small hotels group could adopt as a USP.

Currently some of the 3 and 4 star hotels and their owners have met to discuss their challenges, and how they collectively can overcome the barriers and find a viable solution to their problems. This continues as a work in progress.

Some Marketing Ideas were shared that could be implemented by the Small Hotels of Jordan located in Agaba.

- Market The Red Sea Coast not just a beach destination but a destination with a temperate climate, friendly and inviting town, and a safe destination.
- Promote Aqaba during the week: which is quiet and less crowded than during the weekend
- FLEA MARKET: selling flowers, food, antiques, fresh fruit and vegetables.
- The gift and sundry shops may want to change their inventory to reflect 'souvenirs' that are made in Jordan by Jordanians. Eliminate many of the items made in China.
- Aqaba as a Wedding Destination
- Cool Ramadan Nights

The Outcome of Agaba

The hotels expressed an interest that they all need assistance to increase their occupancy and sustain the visitors stay in Aqaba. There is an expressed interest in having a collective website, on the basis that the USAID will contribute financially and support the start up. Concerns expressed included the cost of the website, the next steps to achieve start up, and the quality assurance of the hotels on the website. The quality assurance concern is an important one for all hotels in the country. It was seen as important factor for success for all hotels to understand and follow a strict and unbiased Quality Assurance judged by an outside objective 3rd party

A suggestion was made to work with ASEZA on the initial planning and set up of the co-op marketing company to strengthen the hotels in Aqaba and to link SHJ with the ASEZA website for creditability and quality assurance standards. In addition, the link to the small hotels of Jordan on the ASEZA website will further market the hotels and Aqaba as a destination. Aqaba does need additional marketing and the collective website is seen potentially as an effective and efficient marketing tool.

Petra - The New World Wonder Centre

Petra is a key location to in the success of the SHJ network but engaging the local hotels to join and improve their standards will be a challenge. USAID is active in Petra and has given a grant to improve the infrastructure (kitchen and food preparation) to many of the hospitality outlets in Petra. The next step is to assist the hotels in Petra come together under one marketing company to promote the destination as well as combining with other key sites in Jordan to continue to attract visitors, find new markets and grow the business year round.

In 2008 Petra had a greater demand than supply and it became clear that many hotels do need to invest in their upkeep and quality standard to satisfy the requirements of modern visitors.

Concerns in Petra

There are some in Petra who are marketing and promoting Petra in their own way and this will continue. However Petra Hotels joining a creditable and active co-op marketing company will strengthen their presence as entities affiliated with international standards and regulations. In time, travelers will choose the reputable sites to book and reserve their trip to Petra and Jordan against others thus trust and assurance will build and develop in time to the benefit of hotels that take that course.

Day Tours vs. Overnight stay in Petra

Many hotels expressed concern at the number of day trippers against overnight stays in Petra. Ideally, Petra needs to sustain the visitor stay and keep the traveler in Petra more than the average two night stay. Many complaints were heard from the hoteliers that Group travelers coming on the cruise ships and across the local borders only come for a day trip visit to the site and leave. The hotels in Petra working together could create a need and desire to stay longer. The two day pass should be promoted as the 'best value' for Petra. The hotels could work with the tour operators to create a need to stay the night or multiple nights such as an evening event (flea market, food court with entertainment, Petra by Night) in the town square of Petra. Collectively the small hotels can work better together as a unit vs. a standalone hotel.

By way of example it was noted that Disneyland in California orchestrates a marketing campaign every summer to keep the tourist in Anaheim California. The Park offers the two day pass for their two parks: Disneyland and California Adventure Park. The "two day Park hopper" offer visitors a chance to buy a two day pass for the price of one. The purpose is to keep the traveler in Anaheim more than one day. Hotels, Restaurants, Gift Shops and Retailing all benefit.

Employment Challenges

A common complaint in Petra is the quality and availability of employees and as a result many hotels employ ex Pat labor from the Far East or Egypt. A suggestion is to implement an employee training program that could alternate employees to hotels within the group to cross train in the different cities and areas. The employees will enhance their skills with the change in their work environment, an incentive to visit and learn about other regions of Jordan, and most importantly gain experience from others hotels and management styles.

The Season

The hotels high season is March to end of May and September to November with the last two weeks of December. The low season is the summer months, and January and February. The travelers visiting the Petra hotels are mainly multi-national from the Americas and Europeans.

Theme in Petra: Family owned and operated Hotels

The Outcome of Petra

The consultant met with the Hotel Association President of Petra, Mr. Fawez Hassanat. He expressed his support for the idea of a reputable and creditable website for the hotels in Petra. He would like to see USAID supports the program financially and also assist with the implementation. Many hotels in Petra, except for Amra Palace, were supportive of additional marketing for Petra. They do believe that additional exposure, programs, and incentives can assist Petra during the slow and low season. Many hotels understood that Petra and Jordan can grow and attract new markets more effectively with the small hotels coming together.

A few hoteliers have worked for International brand hotels and did support the customer feedback mechanism on the website (The Review on the website). They also expressed the importance and implementation of quality assurance and standards that must be implemented throughout for SHJ to be successful.

Hotel occupancy Discrepancies

Occupancy rates obtained from the hotels were skewed and inflated compared to the published "official" figures from the Ministry of Tourism – see Chart below. It is essential for the hotels to be open and straight forward to address their problems, so that a viable solution can be achieved through working together.

Occupancy rates, per the interviews were quoted as follows which are higher than the official figures published by the MoTA:

Madaba: 57%Amman: 69%Aqaba: 67%Petra: 57.5%

Ministry of Tourism Statistics

Jordan Totals

	Hotels	
	TOTAL	
Hotel occupancy 2004 to 2008		
	Room	Bed
Daily Capacity 2008 Monthly Capacity	180,003	340,204
2008	5,474,721	10,347,144
Monthly Occupied 2008	3,027,431	4,798,314
Occupancy rate		, ,
2008	55.3%	46.4%
Occupancy rate 2007	47.3%	39.0%
Occupancy rate 2006	42.4%	35.4%
Occupancy rate 2005	49.4%	41.7%
Occupancy rate 2004	46.4%	39.7%

Hotel apartments				
TOTAL				
Room	Bed			
29,618	92,108			
900,955	2,801,923			
444 607	024 960			
441,627	924,869			
49.0	33.0			
50.0	33.5			
49.0%	33.0%			
48.9%	35.6%			
+0.3/0	33.0 /0			
43.4%	29.8%			

Occupancy by month during 2008

2008

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
42.8%	50.1%	62.4%	73.3%	57.5%	49.9%

2008

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
52.2%	63.4%	45.1%	68.6%	57.8%	39.8%

Conclusions from the Hotels Consultation and Survey Process

- All hotels had same or similar complaints and concerns: low occupancy during the slow and low season.
- All hotels would like to increase their room revenue and occupancy.
- Some hotels expressed that the Jordan Tourism Board and Jordan Hotel Association are not giving them enough attention and support. Marketing opportunities and financial support are going to the 5 star hotels and branded hotels.
- Many hotels would like to be part of the marketing planning process of the Jordan Tourism Board.

- Most hotels work with multiple Tour Operators and would like less tour groups and more FIT business.
- Most hotels were reactive during the slow and low season. Most waited for the business to come vs. proactively working on attracting the business.
- Most hotels had a website and/or brochure.
- Many hotels use 3rd party websites: Expedia.com, Bookings.com and others.
- Many hotels mentioned that travelers in 5 star-hotels spend more money in the hotels, while traveler in a 1-4 hotel star hotels spend less.
- Most hotels believe that a 'Group or Cluster concept' of hotets gave greater strength vs. that of standalone hotel approach.
- Many hotels agreed that a set of quality assurance standards does need to be implemented for the co-op marketing company to be successful.

PART 2 – THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM ENVIRONMENT

Jordan's Travel Trade & Industry

The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB)

The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) was officially launched in March 1998 as an independent, public – private sector partnership committed to utilize marketing strategies to brand, position and promote the Jordan tourism product as the destination of choice in the international markets. The adopted strategies are tuned to reflect the true image of the Jordan tourism product, being a cultural, natural, religious, adventurous, leisure and MICE destination.

As part of its marketing strategies, the JTB plans and executes an integrated program of international promotional activities. This program includes the active participation in trade fairs, trade workshops, trade and consumer road shows, familiarization trips, press trips, brochure & multimedia production, and media relations. To carry out its goals, the Jordan Tourism Board utilizes the services of eleven market based representative offices in Europe and N. America.

Jordan Hotel Association (JHA)

Jordan Hotel Association (JHA) is a non-profit organization that was established in 1969, with the aim of developing the Hotel industry in the Kingdom. The association represents classified and unclassified hotels throughout Jordan and seeks to promote cooperation with the parties working in the sectors, in addition to bolstering the relationships between proprietors of the hospitality industry and other key stakeholders. The Jordan Hotel Association does assist its members to maintain a high standard for their establishments so as to meet international standards. The JHA does offer training and specialized workshops. The hotels in Jordan offer higher standards than those of neighboring Levant countries, quoted by Mr. Michael Nazzal.

There is an official Jordan Hotel Association website that lists all the hotels, camps, motels, suites in Jordan. www.johotels.org

To guarantee better results and to reflect the international standards within the local establishments, JHA became a member of the International Hotel & Restaurant Association (IH&RA), The Arab Hotel & Tourism Association (AHTA), and is one of the main supporters of the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) in its activities and projects. To assure that the hotels in Jordan follow international standards, the JHA does a quality assurance every two years to follow up on the quality assurance of the hotels by MoTA. JHA is the major shareholder for Jordan Applied University College of Hospitality and Tourism Education (JAU), an educational institution specializing in educating and training future employees for the hospitality sector. Portion of the fees paid by the JHA members support the funding of the school.

The consultants met with Michael Nazzal, Jordan Hotel Association President, and discussed the concept of a co-op marketing company for the small and non branded hotels of Jordan. A supporter of the concept, Mr. Nazzal expressed that the success of the company will require two components: the financial commitment from the hotels and the will to commit to the work involved. According, to Mr.Nazzal, the hotels will need to change their mind set to be successful. They will need to come together and agree a uniform objective which all the hotels will work towards. Initially, they need to create a name for the consortium and then move to form a 'brand' and to establish guidelines which support the brand.

Jordan is a medium haul-destination and the goal is to increase the overnight stay in the country. The success of the co-op marketing company with an effective collective website and booking mechanism will assist in achieving that goal.

The JHA was in agreement to support and endorse the co-op marketing company which will be essential support for the new group to present itself as a credible group to the traveler.

Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association (JITOA)

The Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association (JITOA) is an important element to the success of the Small Hotels of Jorand group.as they act as agents for the inbound customers to Jordan. The JITOA mission statement is to raise the standard of practice in inbound tourism to Jordan which is defined as:-

- 1. 1. Ensuring professional conduct of JITOA members with all stakeholders
- 2. Being a major player in the decision making process within tourism
- 3. Being the Inbound tour operating reference in Jordan

JITOA firmly believes, as stated in its Core Values that the guiding principle of all its activities and its Mission is in. "Raising the standard" as it realizes that this is a key factor in international competitiveness and the ability of its members to attract business to Jordan. All of its staff and most of its resources are dedicated to this aim..

The JITO members are a crucial component in the success of any co-op marketing group such as SHJ. They are principal intermediary of the international traveler coming to Jordan. Their pool of information and research is essential to assist the hotels to meet the needs and requirements of modern travelers. JITOA and others do believe there is a growing market of Tour Operators who are recognizing the value of the 'Cluster Hotel Group' concept.

The Travel Environment

Today more than 50% of the bookings in Jordan are affected through the Tour Operators. The future strategy of tour operators is to respond to the customized requirements of their clients for various segmented and product based experiences such as adventure experiences, eco experiences, religious experiences and heritage and cultural experiences etc. Responding properly to these customer trends required deeper market research leading to customer profiling. The main focus for SHJ will be in those FIT and group travelers that are actively seeking smaller non franchised accommodations that offer a range of personal services.

JITOA is actively engaged in researching new travel segments and understanding the requirements and needs of travelers in engaging with these experiences. JITOA stressed the need to implement 'best practices' in the development of the SHJ. Jordan is often sold as part of a Regional package to neighboring countries, such as Egypt and Israel. JITOA suggests that SHJ should focus on implementing new and innovative concepts for the destination as this approach would assist Jordan in standing out from the other countries as a unique and original destination.

Some shared ideas from JITOA were as follows:

- Involve and work with local communities where the SHJ hotels are located so as to source handmade Jordanian gifts and crafts.
- Make a feature of using organic fruits/vegetables grown by the community and used by the hotels.
- Crafts, soaps and other goods used can be incorporated in the hotels 'theme'
- Implement environmental practices, recycle and reusable water and energy.

- Possibly involve the Fair Trade Tourism practices with certification and recognitions to these hotels involved.
- Create attractive marketing ideas as to what the Tourist can 'DO' and relate these to hobby, special interest or education/learning
- The hotels can feature local cuisines and "Home Cooked Meals", similar to The Petra Kitchen in Petra.

Many of the creative ideas listed above can be developed so as to give Jordan an added edge and value over the neighboring destinations.

Concerns from the Travel Trade

The main concerns raised by the travel trade throughout this research involved the need for quality assurance, the standard and size of room Inventory, and the functionality and appeal of the Website. All of these concerns are addressed in this report.

Quality Assurance

While Jordan has a registration and classification system for hotels that has recently been upgraded the current standards of many of the small hotels need improvement to reach the international levels of quality assurance that are consistent with the success of creating the SHJ concept.

In order for the SHJ to be successful and compete in the international market, the implementation of quality assurances program must be implemented as a standard operations procedure, and most probably will be managed by an outside 3rd party entity similar to the example of Manor House Hotels. A suggestion is to involve the JHA or JITOA Once the quality standards are put in place, the Travel Trade support will follow.

Inventory

The number and quality of sleeping rooms available is a concern in accommodating groups. Hotels in close proximity can cooperate and merge their inventory to share groups. There is no doubt that selling through the co-op marketing and hotel themes propose will strengthen the group and make it easier to source business as against a standalone hotel. A core idea of the SHJ is to retain their small and unique structure and therefore aim at those segments that understand and appreciate the 'charm and attraction of the small hotels and at mew emerging markets for Jordan.

Website

Through the web site travelers will have the ways and means to book and reserve directly thereby by-passing the Tour Operators. This is a valid concern world wide and should be addressed by the Tour Operators in Jordan as has happened elsewhere. On the Website, it is recommended to have a facility for the Tour Operators to reserve and manage the allocation of multiple rooms. To establish customer credibility a review mechanism is proposed for web based comment similar to that used by *Trip Advisory* and other customer driven web sites.

Branding for the Small Hotels of Jordan

The definition of a brand (accompanied by its logo or symbol) is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers in terms of the brand essence or promises and to differentiate them from those of other sellers. It will be necessary from the start for the members of SHJ to distinguish themselves and differentiate themselves from other hotels therefore it makes sense for SHJ to consider branding their group so as to encourage their potential customers to see their products and services as the most ideal solution to their holiday needs. The brand should appeal to their markets both in terms of the products and experiences offered and also in terms of the emotional values that can be associated with these individually owned and run hotels. The creation and deployment of a strong brand will be in-valuable to SHJ and as a source of a promise to the consumer.

It is recommended that the brand developed for The Small Hotels of Jordan group should achieve the following aspirations with the international traveler.

- Deliver a clear message and value proposition of what is offered
- Confirm the credibility of the group and their commitment to quality and customer service
- Connect emotionally with prospective customers
- Motivate the customers to buy the product
- Concrete user loyalty designed to create repeat business
- Evoke a feeling, a promise, and engagement with an experience.
- Provide an expectation or consistency across the group
- Provide a technology platform that empowers the consumer

The outcome resulting from such an approach will be the assurance and expectation that the traveler receives when engaging and booking a visit to Jordan that is based on staying at a member property of The Small Hotels of Jordan group.

Boutique Hotels – The Definition

Boutique hotel is a popular generic term used in the developed markets of North America and Europe_to describe an emerging class of hotels that are highly individualistic, intimate, luxurious or funky based on good design and achieving a special environment for selective and discerning clients. Boutique hotels differentiate themselves from larger chain or branded hotels by providing a special environment with highly personalized accommodation, services and facilities. Other sub-groups are emerging under this heading and are sometimes known as "designer hotels" associated with specific designers or established luxury brands or "lifestyle hotels". Originally appearing in the 1980's and based in major cities like London, New York and San Francisco they were a reaction to the "bed factory" approach of the larger hotels and brands. Boutique hotels are always furnished in a themed, stylish or individual manner throughout or with diversity where each room is individually themed or associated with a style, designer or artist. All are known for outstanding added service, reliability, quality and customization. They are inevitably smaller hotels with less than 100 rooms which enables them to offer a more unique guests experience than the typical branded or chain hotel.

Many of Jordan's small hotels have begun to 'theme' themselves as Boutique Hotels and the National Tourism Strategy encourages this trend as Jordan itself is working within a strategy to become a boutique destination. This local effort however is still far short of the standard that is required to qualify as "boutique" to international standards and the formation of the SHJ group can assist in defining what is needed as well as helping member hotels to reach the level of excellence required. Local examples of "boutique" type hotels seen during the research includes:-

- Hisham Hotel in Jabal Amman
- Amrie Suites in Amman
- The Captain Hotel in Aqaba

There is a sense of urgency to start a co-op Marketing Company with an acceptable brand name and on a proper basis that truly reflects the hotels within the group -otherwise, many of these hotels will give a false expectations or inconsistent messages to the inbound traveler to Jordan.

An International Model for a Co-Op Marketing Company

Manor House Hotels and Castle Hotels Group - Ireland

The company was formed 24 years ago by the Irish Tourist Board with the purpose of providing small family hotels with a vehicle to access the international travel trade market. Manor House Hotels Ireland is the public brand name for the company registered as CMV Provident Society which is limited to administration and management functions. www.manorhousehotels.com is the Official Website and marketing organization fully owned by the member hotels. The brand is marketed as representing a specific type and style of hotel in Ireland. The collection of hotels in the Manor House Hotels portfolio ranges from Castle hotels in Ireland, Country House Hotels Ireland, and Luxury Hotels in Ireland, Manor Houses and Exquisite Townhouse Hotels. All properties are privately owned and operated, and the number of rooms varies from 12 to 80. The hotels are both 3 star Irish Country Hotels and 4 star Manor House hotels. All have a family style theme.

The objective of the concept is to book at one central location for ease and simplicity of the traveler coming to Ireland. The booking mechanism or website is capable of booking multiple locations within a region at one site. This allows for one point of purchase, quick and easy accounting, fee transaction, and one point of contact.

The theme of the hotels is as follows: Irish Country Hotels are family orientated and primarily a 3 star. The Manor House Hotels are located of an historical and boutique style façade. Although some are modern in general the hotels are small with an average room size of 60.

There are stringent criteria that are implemented prior to joining the Manor House Hotels Group. A third party entity with no affiliation to a hotel must inspect the property with a check list that must meet the international standards of quality assurance. All hotels are graded and inspected annually.

Currently the Manor House has developed the following Marketing Tools to promote and sell their products. The company does target both leisure and corporate travel, from Tour Operators and Corporate incentive travel. Golf tours, corporate events etc.

A collective website <u>www.manorhousehotels.com</u> featuring all the hotels and their descriptions, a contact phone number, a map of Ireland, a reservation system, a promotion and special offer tab, photo gallery. A collective brochure has been created and distributed to Tour Operators.

The Manor House Hotel and Irish Country Hotels attend tradeshows and functions representing their group. According to the marketing department, occupancy is higher at the Manor house than standalone hotels.

The business structure of the company is a Member run organization. The company is run by a board elected every two years and with a Chairman for each brand. The hotels pay a fee and the fee is determined by the number of rooms. Some hotels do fall out of the system, primary because they are sold and the new owner does not join the group

New Trends in "Small" Hotel Development

With creativity and fine tuning, the Small Hotels of Jordan can use their marketing tools to motivate significant groups of target travelers to use their hotels. Modern tourism derives from lifestyle and not surprisingly Hotels around the world are attempting to define a new designation called "lifestyle" hotels which will accurately respond to the lifestyle requirements and ambitions of their target customers. Typically these are chic, sociable and affordable. Hotel proprietors who have stuck essentially with the rectangular room of standard size will have to use great creativity to reproduce and exceed the redevelopments that these segments have already attained in their homes. This "home standard" is expected be exceeded in hotels and this is now much more difficult. The challenge therefore for hotels is to use modern materials, technology and services to transform hotel rooms into a number of templates that can meet multiple requirements for entertainment (TV, Music and Film) luxury (now redefined in many different ways) office (for business travelers) etc Today's customers expect and possibly need a "reward" from travel due to their more intense work environment and busy lifestyles. The new generations of travelers are seeking a less formalized approach to food service with casual food available any time, free Internet service, self-service check-in/checkout, good availability of information on the local area. The Gen X travelers now in their 30s, are important because they earn on average \$6,000 per capita less than baby boomers but travel more and spend more per capita on travel. These new travelers are far more adventurous, far more curious and far more tech-focused than their parents. Gen Y is interested in things that are less traditional, less

predictable and are drawn to things that are new and fashionable. The SHJ must spend time and invest right at the beginning so as to profile their customers, know them as intimately as possible, and understand their lifestyles and drivers and to help define their strategic approach to their product development and future success.

PART 3 - THE E-MARKETING SOLUTION

The Case for E-Marketing

The Internet has brought many unique benefits to marketing and is particularly suited to travel, holidays and leisure. It is now by far the lowest cost and most effective medium for achieving global distribution, niche penetration and segment communication, It is also well on the way to being the future dominant route to market for information, comparison and bookings. The interactive nature of Internet marketing, both in terms of providing continuous service (7/24), instant response and eliciting responses is a unique quality of the medium and very suitable for the SHJ concept. E- Marketing is experiencing a constant broadening of its scope as it has access to many digital based media and a growing array of marketing tools and bolt on services. E-marketing is relatively inexpensive when compared to the cost ratios and reach of the target audience. It can enable the SHJ to reach a wide and diverse audience for a fraction of traditional advertising budgets. The nature of the medium allows travelers to research their destination, book their accommodations, answer questions and concerns, reserve and pay with a conformation. Therefore SHJ have the advantage of appealing to consumers in a medium that can bring results quickly and economically.

E-Marketing and Travel

- The Internet provides an integrated environment for travelers to aggregate information, carry out research, make comparisons, affect bookings, receive confirmations and make payments.
- The internet can use video to demonstrate the physicality and quality of products such as hotels, attractions etc
- The Internet can substantially reduce the costs traditionally associated with middle men providers in the travel business
- E-marketing monitors behavior and patterns of visitors thus providing the ability to learn and improve.
- On the average, a traveler will view 6 websites before they make their reservation.

E-Marketing and the Small Hotels of Jordan

Many of the small hotels of Jordan currently have websites but these vary in terms of functionality and capability. Many are already receiving bookings from their website and while the trend is growing Jordan's achievement is below the global average. Most hotels are not using the web and its e-marketing capabilities to anything like the optimum extent. Some hotels are using 3rd party booking sites, such as Expedia.com (30% commission fee), Bookings.com (15%+ commission fee). All have confirmed that they are getting business and do anticipate growth in e-commerce. The approach to the development of the proposed new site should be one of 'Digital Storytelling.' That is relevant and practical to the traveler. In this case, we are telling the story of Jordan's small, family-run hotels to the potential traveling community. However, it is critical to understand that it will not just be official tourism bodies and hotels that are telling the story- it will also be the travelers themselves.

The advent of Social Media and its associated tools has facilitated and boosted the sharing of information across the Web which is now easier than ever. This new situation means that hotels are no longer judged just on a website or brochure they design, but also by reviews, comments, photos and videos shared by people who have stayed in them. This trend is growing strongly and organizing its engagement with travelers in ever increasing and diverse ways.

Along with all the usual marketing levers we will pull (Search campaigns, rich content, beautiful design, user-friendly architecture, strategic partnerships, etc.), we should also design the site to incorporate and take advantage of all the new Web 2.0 tools available.

These 'digital sharing' tools, although they are new technology, really represent something very old in the world of marketing: word of mouth advertising. They are nothing more than a fast and easy way for hotels to garner good word of mouth on a grand scale, letting the customer base tell the story to their friends, associates, and the world at large.

Lastly, we must understand that the old way of advertising- where the brand talks *to* the consumer, is no longer effective. Now, we must talk *with* the consumer and follow the growing trend of co-developing the value of products and experiences with the customer as it is now accepted that no one knows more about your product than your customers. The site should include plenty of opportunity for travelers and hotel owners to interact during the planning and information gathering phase as well as during and after the trip. This will create a much stronger relationship between the product provider and the consumer by connecting them on a personal level.



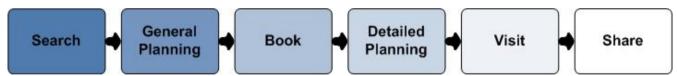
Ultimately, the aim is to create a large, influential and ever-expanding base of advocates for Jordan and its product providers. These are the people who have traveled to Jordan and stayed at one or more of the small hotels, been thoroughly pleased with their trip and who will share their experience across the web. They will tell the authentic story of Jordan's small hotels for us, and begin the marketing cycle once again for their audience- our new customers.

This group of hoteliers and travelers, connected together and telling the story of Jordan and its wonderful independent hotels, will start the movement that will change the perception of these properties and greatly improve their attractiveness to the international tourism industry.

Understanding the Customer Journey

The first step in creating a good website is to understand the Customer Journey. We should consider the audience and their behavior online and use that feedback to inform the development of the site. This will ensure that we are designing for and in response to the traveler rather than for our own singular viewpoint (although stakeholder interests must also be accounted for). Note that this details the stages of a typical customer journey after they have decided that they would like to visit Jordan.

When looking at the customer journey, we should consider every way that we may influence and impact on their decisions and activities online, and build tools and systems that allow us to have the greatest influence



over their actions. Below is a map of the stages of a typical traveler's online journey:

Web Site Construction

The recommended construction of the site is mapped out below. It is important to note that the graphical design/user interface comes last. This is because the functionality of the site and all of its components, including navigation and information architecture, will dictate some elements of the user interface. Also, UI elements of the site may change, depending on the results of user experience tests prior to launch.

The Platform

The recommended platform for the construction of this site is open source PHP with a highly secure database (such as MySQL). The rationale for this recommendation is the intended use of Social Media integration. APIs from the larger SM sites, like Flickr, Twitter and Facebook, work seamlessly in PHP, whereas ASP platforms tend to cause more bugs.

It must be noted that the VisitJordan.com site is built on ASP. Although there is a possibility that the Small

Jordan Hotels site could be integrated into the primary Jordanian Tourism site in the future, and this would be easier if the hotel site was built in ASP, the intention is to build a best-of-breed site first and foremost. In the long term, it may even be wise to convert the VisitJordan.com site to PHP, as use of social media within it will certainly be an advantage.

Search Engine Optimization (Code & Content))

Search Engine Optimization is an old science, and should really fall under the umbrella category of 'Search.' However, there are certain best practice guidelines that should be followed when during construction that allow search engine robots to correctly read, understand, and catalogue a site. The overall Search strategy is much more complex than just 'optimizing' a site, and consists of a mixture of site usage, links, authority of the site and those linking in, user-generated tags, and much more – all of which are discussed later in this report.

The information that search engines 'read' on a website generally consists of the URL, the page title, the meta tags, the first four hundred characters of text, and any ALT tags associated with images or video present. The key is to ensure that all these elements match and combine to reinforce how the page should be interpreted by the search engine and be catalogued appropriately. The content on the page and the tags, titles and keywords used in the code should reflect the page- and the website- in as accurate and captivating a manner as possible.

Once the site is fully developed, an XML sitemap should be generated and submitted to the major search engines. Doing this allows them to see much deeper into the site, as they would normally only 'crawl' the first few pages. A site like this, which is likely to have a substantial number of pages, will be better served by doing this, as very specific searches (i.e. a search on Google for a 'family run three star hotel in Aquaba') will be able to serve the user a link to the exact page of such a hotel, rather than making them start at the homepage and search further. Eliminating non-essential steps in the user's search and allowing them to get the information they are looking for faster and with fewer 'clicks' will result in better goal conversion, whether the goal is a call to the hotel, an email, or an actual online booking. The location of small hotels is important so Google maps should also be used to effect as a search method of growing importance for travelers.

Content

The depth, breadth, quality, and relevance of the content of the site will play a very important role in its success. There is no shortage of websites selling hotels in Jordan, and this site must offer an experience that matches or preferably exceeds in terms of appeal. At the same time, we must remember that it is not a tourism site selling Jordan as a whole- that is what VisitJordan.com is for but is selling specific accommodation products within Jordan as a destination. So the experience should stay focused on the independent hotels and special experiences to be had that involve them.

The recommended content categories, and the pieces of information, tools and assets for each, are:

Hotel Information

- Complete, accurate description (written by a professional copywriter)
- Identification of any special facilities, services or specializations
- Hotel Photos
- Hotel Videos (if available)
- Full contact information (address, telephone, email, fax)
- All Interactive contact information and links (see Social Media and VoIP below)
- Reviews (provided by TripAdvisor or TravelPost API)
- Official Star Rating
- Icons for amenities

Icons for special categories (Family-friendly, Eco, Spa)*

*Note these are categories specific to the hotel, not the area

Brand Information

- Logo and naming
- Copy introducing the brand and the concept
- Background information (typically an 'About Us' page)
- Selection of brand images

Tour & Travel Information

- Vector map of Jordan
- Brief description of Jordan that is:
 - Aimed at driving desire for an authentic experience and more intimate engagement by using small hotels
 - On message with the JTB's brand story
 - Stress Arabic hospitality, welcome and friendliness
 - Covers, in brief, experiences for food, drink and transport- but links with JTB site and others for deep information on things like currency, taxi prices, detailed guides, etc.
- Popular itineraries that always outline 5 +day stays in Jordan (provided by JITOA)
- List of JITOA tour operators who specialize in small, independent hotels and tailor made tours

Quality Information

MoTA has finalized a new and strict Hotel Classification System. A logo for this project should appear throughout the site- or one should be designed, that creates a 'Stamp of Quality.' This should have a page that briefly and clearly describes the classification system so that travelers' expectations are met as best as possible. This page should also link to the projects website for detailed information.

When stars are shown in a hotel's page, a small 'What's This?' link should be present that tells users a little about the classification system when hovered over, and links to the full page on the site.

Given this, the content should be:

- Copy on HCS page
- Link to HCS website
- Copy for 'hovering box'

Authority of Information

This refers to the fact that this will be the official site for small hotels in Jordan, supported by Siyaha and fully complying with government standards. Given that there cannot be any official 'stamp of authenticity,' from MoTA or JTB management will have to work very hard to create a brand that can create trust amongst travelers.

A true brand must be created, in every sense of the word, including a logo, name and naming system, color palette, vision, mission, positioning, and tone of voice and above all commitment to deliver on the brand promise of great personal experiences and high standards of comfort and service.

The organization of this group should be one of a 'strategic and result driven marketing partnership' where all members hotels are working together to achieve a common goal. Information on the site should make this clear, and describe the group in as official a manner as possible. A group Chairperson should be appointed, even if it is more of a figurehead position, and there should be a formal message from them to

travelers, along with a photograph and signature.

In an ideal world, there would be some support of a recognized association as well. It is strongly recommended that this comes from the JHA, and that their logo is used within the site and their support be shown, through text, both on this site and on theirs.

Dynamic Data

The site needs to be constructed with the ability to scale easily, quickly, and with as little extra development cost as possible. When building the database of entities that will populate the content of the site (an entity would be, for example, a hotel, an event listing, an activity near a hotel, etc.), the following should be considered:

- How will information about the entity be displayed? Will it ever be used on a mobile phone?
- How much information will be shown at launch? Will that grow over time? Should there be a limit? (We may start with two photos of a hotel, but have twenty photos in a year)
- What dynamic systems (like a Google Map) will the entity have to work with?
- What site features might be incorporated at a later date that isn't being used now?
- Will other websites ever access the database (for example, will we offer White Label services)?
- Will there be various classification systems for the hotels?

By asking these questions before work begins, we'll be able to build a database that is flexible and scalable. This will also allow the site managers to adopt new technologies quickly – like the addition of a dynamic Google Map (when their mapping system is accurate for Jordan), or use in an iPhone application. Not doing the work now will only result in delays, extra work and extra cost when management finds new marketing opportunities in the future.

Social Media

The integration of popular social media tools is an essential part of this site. The aim is to use a Digital Storytelling approach, and these tools are what will allow us to do this. How they can be used for Search, customer engagement and building brand advocacy is discussed in the Marketing section of this report.

For the purposes of site development, we will consider two key functions of social media – those of sharing and interacting.

Sharing

Sharing deals with the concept of travelers sharing information about their experience at a hotel with others. It also deals with the sharing of an interest in a website or specific page. The sharing tools recommended are Flickr. YouTube and Share This.

Flickr is a photo sharing site that is arguably the most popular photo site on the Web. It allows users to upload very high quality photos, store them, and share them with friends- both through the Flickr site and through a wide array of APIs that pull Flickr photos through to Facebook, Blogs, Websites and much more. When building this site, each hotel should have their own Flickr page constructed, along with an API that pulls images from their Flickr photo album through to their hotel page. Additionally, the group should have it's own Flickr account that combines all the best photos available and displays them in a dynamic gallery within the website.

YouTube is the world's largest video sharing community. Just as with Flickr, each hotel should have their own YouTube 'channel.' Once they have quality video content, either taken by themselves or by guests, these should be placed on the hotel's channel and pulled through to their site via the YouTube API.

"Share This" is dynamic and very flexible sharing tool. By placing their 'widget' throughout the site, we will allow users to share our content with whomever they like, in whatever way they prefer. The tool allows people to quickly post a link on any major social bookmarking site (del.icio.us, StumbleUpon, Technorati, Reddit, etc.), upload it to social media like Facebook or LinkedIn, post it to their blog, or email it directly to

a friend. These systems also allow the user to attach keywords that will be later used in Search, write descriptions and make comments that are shared at the same time.

Interacting

Interacting deals with digital platforms that will allow the hotels to interact directly with travelers through means beyond simple email. The potential level of interaction is widely varied, from occasional blog posts for readers to free Voice Over IP (VoIP) calls to real-time Instant Messaging. The reality of human resources, time differences, technical savvy and just plain willingness means that what tools hotels will use will be very different from one to the next. For this first launch of the site, three systems are recommended: Facebook, Twitter and VoIP. These are recommended because of their low level of time commitment and ability to reach a large audience at no cost.

Facebook and/or Twitter accounts should be built for each hotel, depending on their level of commitment to the programme and willingness and ability to use these tools. At least one should be used as a minimum. Please note that, should a hotel wish to use both tools but be concerned that time constraints will make it difficult, Twitter can be set up to automatically update a Facebook account, reducing the total workload.

These two elements should be given very clear visual placement in the form of graphical (typically a version of the system's logo) link along with the contact details for each hotel.

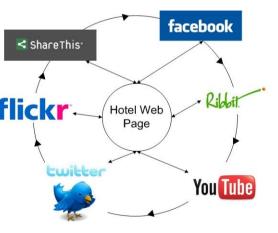
Voice over IP technology would also be very beneficial to employ. Which system is best must be decided based on what the hotels may already be using along with a 'default' service offered by the site managers. I would recommend development of the new Ribbit platform (see www.ribbit.com) for this, as it will allow potential visitors to call each hotel for free, making direct and personal interaction as accessible as possible.

The 'Outpost Strategy'

The development of this system, and its use as described later in the Marketing section, uses a classic social media Outpost Strategy. The objective of this strategy is complete integration and interactivity of all systems and communities where members of our audience are members.

This simply means that each system is an outpost of the brand- in this case the hotel- that interacts with the community in which it resides but ultimately aims to bring members of that online community through to the core brand website. It is also widely known that people in the target audience for this project are typically members of several online communities. So, it is important to ensure that each system both links and interacts with the others as much as possible, as well as pointing to the branded website.

A diagram of a typical outpost strategy is shown to the right.



Hotel Reviews

The main reason that travelers choose to stay at familiar, branded hotels is because they trust the brand, and feel that it comes with a universal adherence and assurance of quality. At the same time, many travelers, and especially those in the segments and audience being targeted by this project, love the idea of discovering a great, yet little known, hotel that is authentic and local.

The importance of objective, third party reviews with regards to hotels cannot be underestimated. The meteoric rise in popularity of TripAdvisor has been due almost entirely to the traveling public's desire for this kind of affirming and high quality information. And the co-opting of review systems by other major online players in the travel space, like Kayak's new TravelPost.com and Expedia's reviewing system (pulled from TripAdvisor, a subsidiary), is a clear demonstration of the importance of reviews to the world of online travel.

It is recommended that each hotel in this program has a review section. Furthermore, that this review

section is an API from either TripAdvisor or TravelPost. This means that the hotel's TripAdvisor or TravelPost page and content will be pulled through dynamically to their own page on the site.

TripAdvisor has built a lot of credibility in this arena, and currently offers a very well designed API to hotels. However, TravelPost has 'one upped' them by pulling reviews for hotels from across the Web and combining this service with Metasearch, allowing travelers to search for and book the very best online rates for the hotel.

It should be noted that many small hotels in Jordan are currently present on these sites. Also, a hotel does not need to work with an online travel agency, like Expedia, to appear on these sites- they may simply post their information for free and open themselves up to reviews.

At the time of writing, development is still new for TravelPost. The available APIs from these companies can change rapidly, so a decision on which to use is best left until actual development begins.

Content Management System

A simple content management system should be developed to allow both the administrators (site managers) and hotel managers to continually update content on the site. Two levels of access should be created: one for the administrators granting access to all content and one for the hotels that allows them to update certain elements of their own content with access controlled through their own unique username and password.

The content that can be changed by the hotels should be limited to information about events, special promotions and priced offerings... It is important also to establish the availability of the "best price" on the web site. This limit is designed to allow administrators to ensure the quality and reality of content like photos, videos, and copy. Requests to changes to this type of content should be submitted by the hotels directly to the administrators, who will ensure the integrity of the brand.

The content edited by the hotels needs to have strict controls and checks, including:

- Automatic spell checking
- Mandatory begin and end dates for events and promotions
- Clear details for priced offerings
- Mandatory begin and end dates of display of events and promotions, where the end date of display cannot be later than the end date of the actual event/promotion
- The system should force font type, size, colour, and style into the site's design scheme
- Any links inserted must be verified
- A 'preview' page must be viewed prior to publishing content
- The number of characters in text fields must be restricted to work with the site design, and available characters left to type should be shown as the hotel works

For any event or promotion uploaded by a hotel, there should be controls only available/viewable by the administrator that will place the promotion in advertising sections of the site as well (see the Advertising Sales section under Management). Along with determining where the ad will appear, controls must be in place that state the start and end date of the ad's display.

Assuming that the site will also be built to accommodate third party advertising, Standard ad sizes should be used, per the Interactive Advertising Bureau's specifications (see http://www.iab.net/iab_products and industry services/1421/1443/1452), and for simplicity's sake, and the sake of design, just two or three options should be selected that will work well with the site's design and various templates. The administrator should be able to upload the file, decide where it will appear on the site, and set a start and end date for its appearance. Regarding the location of these ads, it is recommended that we begin with a combination of Run-of-Site, Destination Specific, and Activity Specific categories and just two positions per page maximum, all controlled through the CMS.

Customer Relationship Management System

This will form three components: an email marketing tool, a simple research tool and an e-zine. It will only be accessible by the administrators, who will be able to view the database of users who register online, sort/filter it, alter it (unsubscribe users, for example), and create and send mass emails from it. They will also be able to obtain statistical information on users, as described below. A motivational e-zine will be produced on a regular basis.

On the front end of the system, user should be asked for the following information:

- Email address
- First and last Name
- Salutation
- Nationality
- Type of experience(s) interested in

The last item, type of experience, should be presented as a series of check boxes. Recommended experiences are:

- Spa
- Family
- Adventure
- Arts & Culture
- Religious
- History & Archeology

This information will be used to understand the user profile better, and to target email marketing efforts. The administrators should be able to see graphs showing how many total users select each type of experience as well as cross reference this with nationality.

The email system should allow the administrators to select All users or filter recipients by any number of categories using Boolean logic (i.e., send only to people from England *and* France who have said they are interested in Religious *or* History & Archeology experiences but *not* those who have also indicated Family. This will allow administrators to ensure that people who have registered only receive promotions and news that is highly relevant to them, which will in turn increase conversion rates and retain and protect subscription rates.

An exclusion tool should also be built, that allows the administrator to set commands that will exclude people who have received an email in the past 'X' number of weeks from receiving a new email, enabling them to avoid any 'spam' effects.

Design/User Interface

Good design is very subjective, but the following guidelines should be adhered to, to get the best result. The design of this site should:

- Coordinate with the VisitJordan.com brand theme
- Successfully tell the story of Jordan both visually and textually
- Be thoroughly tested in all browsers
- Allow the site to load very quickly

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Be considered of a world-class standard

...and finally, the user interface should be based not only on the managers' and developers' intuition, but on actual consumer testing before it is finalized.

Management

Although the exact group who should manage this is not yet decided, it should certainly be managed centrally in Amman, ideally by the JHA with assistance from Siyaha and the JTB. Either way, there will need to be involvement by all of these parties, as well as the MoTA and possibly JITOA.

Administration

This system will require a full time marketing manager and, depending on its growth, possibly a marketing assistant as well. The functions that will need to be carried out by management include:

- Writing and executing the annual marketing plan and budget
- Developing strategic marketing partnerships that build brand awareness and strengthen the brand image
- Ensuring that all digital assets (photos, video, logos, copy) are continually updated and of the highest quality
- Liaising with hotel owners to ensure they are taking full advantage of all the sites features
- Liaising with the industry and the media as an ambassador of small Jordanian hotels
- Ensuring that the group takes advantage of and creates effective marketing opportunities with the local tourism industry
- Identifying and executing revenue generating opportunities
- Controlling and managing the database and all email promotions
- Identifying any new technology that could benefit the group and using when appropriate
- Selling and managing any advertising, sponsorship or promotional activities
- Managing SEO and Social Media
- Organizing training sessions and manuals for hotel owners on the recommended use of various social media and digital tools

Quality Control

Hotel Information

Throughout the course of many meetings with industry leaders, and in particular tour operators, the issue of hotel quality has been continually raised. One of the aims of this site is to manage traveler's expectations extremely well, giving them accurate information on what to expect at each hotel so their experience in Jordan matches the expectations they had before they arrived.

The new Hotel Classification System by MoTA and the JHA will be used to classify all hotels on the site. The method of classification will be clearly described, and a link to the classification system's website will be provided. Lists of amenities will also be cross checked with the MoTA database to ensure complete accuracy.

The hotel database used for this project should be linked to the new Tourism Establishment ICT System for real-time accuracy of hotel ratings. Should the ICT system change a hotel's rating, or remove a hotel from the system, this action will automatically be applied to the same hotel on the Small Hotels website.

Reviews

There is no doubt that opening the small hotels system to blogging will attract positive and negative comments therefore member hotels must be prepared to review and examine their systems and service delivery with a view to additional training for front line staff on customer care and delivering great customer experiences.

Some concerns have been expressed by both hoteliers and tour operators over the use of user reviews on the site. There is a feeling that many reviews are false, and that it will be very likely that hotels will deliberately post negative reviews about competitors.

Negative comments for some can diminish the effectiveness of the site for all so members should commit to quality standards and procedures that exceed what is required by the official standards.

While it may not be possible to entirely eliminate this problem of unfair negative comment, a strict and fair system of checks should be put into place to keep this system's integrity, and that of the hotel group, Upon becoming a member of this site, hotel owners must sign a contract stating that they will not post reviews about their own hotel or anyone else's. Should they be caught doing so, they will be removed permanently from the site and membership of the group.

In particular members should discuss the adoption of a group of small services that have a low or no cost that can be implemented by all and can be used as USP's on the site. Examples of these might include:-

- Offering a glass of water or juice while checking in
- Offering a map of the area or even a small tourist pack on check in
- Having a briefing for visitors on check in telling them about the location and what the area can offer
- Offering to make bookings for guests taxis, hairdressing, leisure, restaurants etc
- Check in staff bringing guests to their rooms
- Availability of self service trolleys for luggage
- Having a free self service tea/coffee service at 11.00 and 16.00

In addition to the positive action to diminish and eliminate negative comment there must be some system of editorial control before blogs good or bad are admitted to the site. This is to avoid the spurious or any that are intentionally6 motivated to cause damage to competitors. Site administrators must regularly check reviews appearing on the site and immediately notify hotel owners is something appears that is negative and untrue. Review sites, like TripAdvisor, always allow hotel owners to respond to negative complaints and dispute them where necessary. A record should be kept of all blogs and comments received and the committee should ensure that if too many are directed at certain premises or certain aspects of service that these are check on and corrected or that members not delivering on their commitments to the group are formally requested to correct the problems or even to leave the group.

Advertising Sales

As described in the Content Management Section, hotels will be able to upload promotions and events to their page. It should be made possible for them to display these items elsewhere on the site as well. However, as part of the site's sustainability structure, the ability to promote a hotel on the site's homepage should be treated as advertising, and, as such, be paid for.

In addition to the hotels, Tour Operators who are members of JITOA may also advertise on the site, as well as other bodies officially sanctioned by Siyaha. It is very important to only allow high quality operators and businesses to promote themselves on the site, as they will be indirectly affecting the brand. Only businesses related in some way to travel and tourism should appear.

Use of the Data Base

The administrators will have complete and exclusive control of the database (along with any supporting development agency that helps build and manage the site). Email campaigns should be delivered on a regular basis and scheduled in advance for each year. Of course, the schedule may change due to issues in the industry, like a sudden and unexpected drop in demand.

This system should be used to generate revenue. A schedule of all campaigns should be delivered to all the hotels at the beginning of the marketing cycle, with the option to be included in the campaign for a price. This must me pre-paid for inclusion.

The company that develops the website should ensure that the system can handle the delivery of mass email campaigns and give detailed reports on the result of them (subscribers, open rates, recipients). Depending

on cost effectiveness and ability to scale over time, either a proprietary system or an 'off the shelf' solution could be chosen.

Technical Support

The development company that builds the site should be kept on a retainer to manage any technical issues that may arise during the site's existence. They should be able to resolve any hosting issues and manage the domain names as well.

Marketing

The goal of the marketing efforts for this site is to create a new group and brand that tells the story of authentic, welcoming, independent hotels in Jordan and what inspires tourists to stay with them.

The foundation of the distribution marketing strategy for this site is primarily made of Digital Marketing and Strategic Partnerships for the first year. This will keep costs to a minimum and allow the highest degree of measurement for management. The intention is to have the site incorporated into the overall marketing strategy of the JTB and to work closely with them and other leading tourism entities to build an integrated Jordan Tourism product and synergistic marketing campaign, of which the Small Hotels site is one component.

Strategic Partnerships

During development, a series of key partnerships should be agreed that will allow the site to gain a strong presence at the beginning of the Customer Journey. When the traveler begins this journey, their first steps are normally 'information gathering' about the destination. Along with general searches on Search Engines like Google, they will be learning about Jordan from VisitJordan.com and other Travel sites that provide editorial information about a destination, like Lonely Planet, The Travel Channel, and National Geographic.

Getting this site in front of the traveler during their information search is essential to its success. Once they move beyond this phase, they are likely to cross over to major online travel agencies, like Expedia, Travelocity, Kayak, etc., where the brand story will not be told and the hotels will become nothing more than a commodity that is unknown to the traveler.

A very prominent presence on VisitJordan is ideal, and a presence on other editorial travel sites and official association sites, like the JHA, should be sought out. In addition to these, partnerships should be sought with smaller, niche travel sites (who will certainly be more willing to work with management than large OTAs, who will simply ask for a large advertising investment), and airlines whose clients may be booking or researching airfare prior to deciding on a hotel. Royal Jordanian should be the number one target for a partnership, as well as other air and sea carriers who bring tourists to Jordan.

Experiential Marketing

In addition to educating potential travelers about the small hotels, the site should also show people what kind of experiences they may have whilst here. Experience-based holidays are already widely sold by most tour operators and discussed on VisitJordan.com, so it is recommended that the experiences shown on this site mirror those marketed elsewhere. These experiences are:

- Fun & Adventure
- History & Culture
- Eco & Nature
- Leisure & Wellness
- Religion & Faith

In this experience section of the site, copy should be written describing typical trips or activities associated with each and a standard itinerary. This area is where our top-quality tour operators can really shine and win new business. JITOA operators who run tours related to each experience, and who specialize in working with these small hotels, should be featured along with deep links to relevant pages on their websites. Note that we should only feature operators who are serious about championing these hotels and who have a solid

reputation with them and the public- not operators who will only switch the customers over to five star, branded hotels- as this defeats the purpose of the site.

In addition to the star ratings hotels will have, it is recommended that three experiential classifications are created and used for these hotels. These focus on facilities in the hotel itself, and not on activities near the property. They are:

- Eco Friendly
- Spa
- Family Friendly

This will allow travelers to search for hotels and plan their trip based in part on specific types of experience, and allow them to find the hotel for their needs quickly. The ability to filter search results on the site by these criteria should be present, and an intuitively understood icon system should be developed for display on a hotel's information page, ideally alongside or near the star rating.

This method of combining experience with ratings will help us complete our objective of quickly connecting the traveler with a hotel or operator that will match their desires and expectations perfectly, which we hope will result in a very memorable and perfect vacation in Jordan.

Search

Earlier in this report we discussed SEO (Search Engine Optimization) as it applies to code and content. These days, search engines are much smarter than they were just a few years ago, and now they rely much more on links and user-generated information about a website to determine it's ranking in association with various key words and phrases.

The most important factors considered by a search engine, outside of actual content, are:

• Authority of Inbound Links

This deals with other websites that link to the Small Hotels site. Search engines do not treat all links as equal- they give them weight. The more popular and relevant the site linking in, the more weight the link is given. And the greater the 'weight' of a site's inbound links, the higher I will appear in relevant searches. For example, an ideal inbound link for this site would be one from Lonely Planet or National Geographic. Their sites have tremendous 'authority,' as they have a vast amount of traffic, are considered highly credible, and are very relevant to travel of this nature.

• User Generated Tags and Votes

More and more, search engines are relying on input form actual users as to the quality, content and relevance of websites. Google is piloting a system where users vote up or vote down search results, which then affects how their robots rank the site. Social Bookmarking tools like Delicious, StumbleUpon and Digg allow users to submit sites they like, describe them in their own words (there's that digital storytelling again), and list a set of 'tags' or keywords that they think should be associated with the site. The idea is that the combined effect of real people telling search engines which are the best and most relevant sites will automatically bring the best to the top and developers won't be able to use any of the old SEO tricks to beat the competitors.

Getting better search rankings through inbound links form major travel sites is easier said than done. There aren't many destination sites that aren't asking Lonely Planet to put a link to them on their page, and they certainly won't do this for just anyone. However, the goal should be to build links that are as relevant as possible. So, the targets should include niche sites that are small enough to get excited about working with Small Hotels, but of a very high quality and who speak with the right audience. These could include adventure travel sites, eco travel sites, popular blogs about travel and sites relating to relevant tourist activities, like Petra, the Dead Sea, dining in Jordan, and so forth.

Links are also created when the social media strategy is executed. All pages created in each social media platform should include a link back to the site, and individual hotel social media pages should do this as well.

Lastly, all member hotels should be displaying the Small Hotels logo prominently- and proudly- on their site. This should be a link to the Small Hotels website. By creating this extensive network of quality inbound links- from hotels, travel sites, and social media platforms- the site managers will begin a cycle of driving relevant traffic and moving up in search that should steadily increase over time.

Increasing search results through user generated information is a matter of simply asking people to recommend you and making it easy for them to do so. Tools like Share This are perfect for this, and should be displayed prominently throughout the site.

Use of Social Media

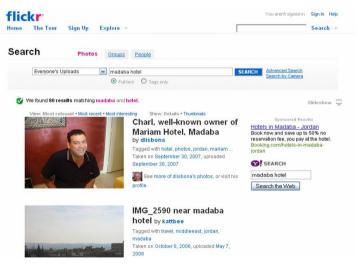
As well as the hotels having their own social media platforms, the brand should have them, too. How well hotel owners use these tools is likely to vary widely so training might be offered as part of the overall package by Siyaha. By having a centrally controlled SM network managed by the site's marketing director, management will retain control of the brand and be able to build it online accordingly.

Every effort should be made to train hotel owners and selected staff in the use of these tools and get them active online. Although it may seem alien at first to some, they are all very easy to use and quick to learn.

One of the objectives of this entire project is to connect people. To connect hoteliers with travelers and to connect travelers with one another. Just by creating the network- both as a brand and as individual hotels- and showcasing the tools prominently throughout the site, the brand will take a step in the right direction. Of course, you cannot force people to interact with you; but you can certainly encourage them to. To do this, we should consider each point of contact the hotels, and brand, will have with travelers and then how we can encourage them to start interacting and connecting with the group. These could include:

- Including the social networks a hotel is on in collateral (brochures, business cards, in welcome letters, guest comment cards and on printed receipts) and asking them to contribute relevant information, like photos of their trip on a Flickr site, or a nice review on TripAdvisor
- Placing icons and links on the hotel's own website
- Placing links and icons in all standard email signatures
- Holding regular contests to see which guest can send in the best photo
- Telling people on one network about any others the hotel or brand is on
- Simply telling guests, on the phone or whilst they're at the hotel

Once the network is up and running, the key to flickr success is regular use and interaction. Since this will require some time commitment, hotels should be prepared to spend a few minutes online each day before setting up their network. For those who are not very familiar with these platforms or who are worried about having the time to manage them properly, it is a good idea to start with something simple and low on time requirement, like Flickr. From here, it's just a matter of talking with people and sharing interesting news and informationanswering questions, posting nice new photos, uploading a video and then asking people what they think of it, etc. Although it may sound like a lot to take on, it really is just starting a dialogue with the travelers, engaging with them, and letting each hotelier's personality guide the rest.



Promotions

Most of promotional activity will occur once the site is up and running, and be directed by the site's

marketing director. However, it is recommended that the site works as closely as possible with the JTB and their marketing efforts.

The JTB's promotional schedule and nature of those promotions must be known to management well in advance, so that their efforts can be supported and duplicated as much as possible. Messaging should always match as closely as possible whilst being tailored to speak to the site's audience and product line so as to be as resonant as possible.

As well as following the brand lead by the JTB, a very proactive approach should be taken by the marketing director. Regular promotions that could be featured through the JTB's channels should be created and presented to them. The Small Hotels site must become a very active and visible brand within the JTB and to all audiences of the Jordan brand message.

Evaluation

A continuous cycle of measurement and evaluation by both the site managers and hotel owners must be engaged. From the site manager's side, Google Analytics is strongly recommended as the online analytical tool to use. Along with this, statistics from the CRM system on the type of experiences travelers are asking for and statistics on bookings through the site (see Online Bookings in the Funding and Sustainability section), should be compiled monthly and shared across the members and related tourism groups (JHA, JTB, JITOA, MoTA).

Decisions on what types of promotions or products should be created, which global markets are the most interested in the site and how to engage them, and changes in the overall site offering should be governed by these analytics first and foremost, as well as by known industry trends.

As well as sharing this information with the hotels, management should also seek out feedback from the hotels on a quarterly basis. There approval of the site is critical to success, as it will govern both how active they are in helping to create great content and promotions and how many new hotels decide to join after hearing positive feedback from their peers.

Additional Marketing Tools for the Small Hotels of Jordan

While the web based E-marketing solution will be the core element of the marketing approach recommended for adoption by the Small Hotels of Jordan other tools will be needed and the SHJ group should not be limited in how they approach the central challenge – attracting more visitors to improve occupancy rates and rebalancing occupancy rates over the course of the year

Marketing Brochure

This is the age of the "knowledge economy" which is based on the platform of technology. Segments that still require hard copies can be catered for through printable downloads and other e-commerce tools.

A professional quality brochure featuring SHJ will be a required marketing tool both in printed and PDF format. This might be produced so that there is a page per member property which will give maximize flexibility allowing for individual use as well as group promotional success. The brochure will be refreshed and printed annually featuring all aspects of the general group messages as well as showing the individual hotels.

The Brochure can be used as a promotional tool at consumer and trade fairs, in answer to written enquires as well as by the JTB network, Travel Trade Professionals and Tour Operators.

Loyalty Program

Loyalty programs have now proven their worth for the banded groups and is something that should be positively considered by the SHJ group as a means of adding value and attracting repeat visitors. A unique and fun 'Loyalty Program' can be created with a Club Card and membership concept as well as immediate benefits (upgrades and services) for SHJ customers. Communication can be enhanced through monthly e-zines and alerts to special offers.

Trade Shows and Trade Fairs

SHJ can effectively be represented at Trade shows and Trade and consumer fairs with their collective approach offering both economies of scale as well as more comprehensive offerings to trade customers because of the range of areas that can be offered.

News, Promotions, and Press Releases

The Website will be powered by an advanced news and press releases engine.

The web administration interface for this database application will be simple enough for anyone to keep the site fresh with new content.

Newsletter system, an optional feature

An Advanced e-newsletter can be constructed, managed, and delivered to all subscribed addresses in the database. The site administrator can change the content of the newsletter at anytime, within a pre-defined newsletter template, and proceed with submitting the newsletter to be sent online through the mail server. Images can be also uploaded within the newsletter's content.

Photo/ Video gallery

A dynamic photo gallery allowing the site administrator to upload the required images/videos to the Website. Directly the uploaded images/videos will be included in the Website as thumbnails, which will be enlarged/played by the click of the mouse.

Creation and Sustainability of the Small Hotels of Jordan

In the time spent by the consultant interviewing industry leaders in Jordan, it became very clear that there is a serious concern about the quality of independent hotels, and in particular those rated two stars or less. Tour operators largely avoid them if possible, as they have little confidence in their ability to deliver a good standard of quality and service. However, not everyone thinks this, and most agree that there is a small base of at least 25 independent hotels that are of a very good standard.

For this to be successful, management must make every effort to begin with the most reputable hotels. This does not mean highest rated, as someone can certainly run a one star hotel with excellent service and quality that matches the travelers' expectations (provided they are managed properly). It is recommended that the list of the first hotels to appear on this site be drawn up jointly in consultation with JITOA and JHA Board Members and that both these bodies should assist in the creation and formation of the new SHJ group as these are the people that have the greatest experience with the hotels, and are best positioned to determine who will deliver a good experience to Jordan's tourists at the required level for entry.

Structure

The group should begin with an informal structure such as a "Marketing Alliance" until such time as there are sufficient commitments by members for a proper consultation and decision. At each step however from the start they should have a written MOU or written rules so that the reasons for the alliance and the future intentions are at all times clear to joining members. It is recommended that this group be assisted in formation and establishment by the JHA and JITOA but it should have its own agreed membership rules and administration and work under the control of its own committee elected by the group members. Later when this is working well the members can consider forming a company or other independent legal entity. The group will require to maintain its own accounts to receive member's fees and subscriptions as well as grants and sponsorships and revenues generated from its activities. These funds would be re-invested in the group's marketing efforts, so it will operate as a non-profit organization.

The members should elect and mandate a group of not more than six people to form the initial committee to progress the business of establishing the group. This committee of six should appoint from among themselves a chairperson to serve for two years. Only valid members of the Small Hotel of Jordan Hotel group should be eligible to serve on the committee or to vote on their appointment

As soon as progress and funding allows the group should appoint a full-time, salaried Marketing Director to

manage the affairs of the group.. This person would report in directly to the SHJHMA chairman and management committee.

Membership & Fees

Membership for the hotel members should be annual. A formal set of rules governing membership with a written application form must be created from the start for hotel owners to sign, spelling out the following guidelines, rules and responsibilities:

- Membership in the group is annual and should be based on an agreed fee plus a cost per room set by the group as this will give a fair result.
- If the group receives more than an agreed number of complaints about the hotel within the period of
 one year the hotel will be placed on probation or removed from the group as the committee may
 decide and fees will not be refunded.
- Any hotel caught posting reviews about themselves or another hotel in any online reviewing system, such as TripAdvisor, may be removed from the group permanently and fees will not be refunded.
- The official hotel classifications are linked directly to the MoTA classification system. The group may establish additional criteria agreed by the members which exceed the MoTA requirements so as to ensure that high standard that group members must comply with. Where any member is downgraded by MoTA may result in removal from the group without fees being refunded.
- The group may vote to remove a member hotel for misconduct. The motion to remove must be supported by two thirds of the committee entitled to vote
- Hotels must agree that owners and/or senior front line staff must to participate annually in an agreed number and type of Hotel Training and Quality initiatives each year

Development Budged

The group will subscribe an annual fee as well as seeking grant and technical assistance from USAID through JTD II to assist them with the formation phase and early operational phase of creating, establishing and rolling out the planned operation.

Open Hospitality Recommended as the service provider

The recommended company to create this site is Open Hospitality (OH). The company is recommended due to their excellent track record developing hotel websites on an international scale, their ability to work with hotels at all stages of technological advancement, and their compelling pricing model. OH operates a model that delivers an online booking system as well as all other aspects of web development recommended in this report. They take a commission on bookings as their payment, meaning that they don't succeed if Small Hotels doesn't succeed and that the hotel owners have no or limited financial exposure. This model will allow the project to move along swiftly and become a new force in Jordanian Tourism within a matter of months rather than years.

On-line Bookings

Like all good travel websites SHJ site will offer online bookings. The goal is help member hotels win new business in every way possible, so travelers will have the opportunity to call the hotel directly, email them, book through a tour operator, or book through any of the OTAs if the hotel participates in such programmes.

Open Hospitality will build and operate an online booking system as part of their agreement. The system works with any level of technology- from a hotel already active in the major OTAs to a hotel with nothing more than a telephone and fax machine. The system has been tried and tested for years, and is currently in use by a very wide array of hotel groups and consortia around the world.

Revenue Opportunities

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The site must be able to sustain itself long after development, and so a series of activities must be engaged in to generate additional income. This income will support the salary of the Marketing Director, any technology costs (hosting, tech support), and additional marketing activities that be a cost.

Recommended revenue generators are:

Advertising

Reputable businesses in or related to the Tourism industry should be allowed to advertise on the site. Of course, the site needs to maintain a very professional appearance, and advertising space should be limited and quality controlled. Also, businesses that sell something that is in direct competition with the site's members, like an advertisement for a five star branded hotel, should not be allowed.

Details of the structure of these ads have already been outlined in the Content Management section of this report.

Pricing will depend on visibility, with Run-of-Site ads being the most expensive, followed by destination and activity type. Pricing should also grade on popularity, so an add on Petra-related pages should cost more than an ad on Salt-related pages. Pricing should also vary by size of ad. If we begin with two possible ads per page, the assumption is that there are two sizes. Also, it is very important to note that what advertisers are willing to pay depends primarily on the number of people who will see their advertisements so pricing should change over time.

Sponsorship

In the foundation period it may be difficult to win many advertising agreements, primarily because:-

- b) Advertisers are only just starting to hear about the opportunity and the site will not have a track record
- c) The site will still be in the process of building its number of Unique Users, and may not yet have enough traffic to attract big advertisers.

Winning a single corporate sponsor can be a good solution to boosting the first year's funding. Using this model does not preclude advertisers at all, so both programs can run, and generate revenue, in tandem.

It is recommended that an official corporate sponsor is sought out prior to the launch of the site, who will pay for one year's brand exposure. A typical cost and benefit mix would be 7,000-10,000 JD for the exclusive sponsorship for one year

Benefit to the Sponsor

- Exclusive sponsorship of the website
- First right of refusal for the following year
- Ability to communicate with database on an agreed basis
- Use of site's logo in marketing campaigns and websites as 'Official Sponsor of XXXX' + logo
- Exposure to site members and facilitation of direct contact with member hotels

Staffing and Salaries

It is anticipated that the site should be managed in the formation period by the committee until the appointment of the Marketing Director as soon as this can be facilitated. This structure should be reviewed after the site has launched and the work load can be properly assessed.

The Marketing Director would carry out all responsibilities listed in the Administration section under Management.. A salary of 12,000 JD per year should be planned for. The person should be a contract employee but this may have to be facilitated by the JHA.

The grant applied for to assist in the formation and launch of the group should include a contribution towards the salary of the marketing director for an initial period. After this period the costs of the group marketing operations should be funded through a mix of sponsorship, advertising, and hotel membership fees.

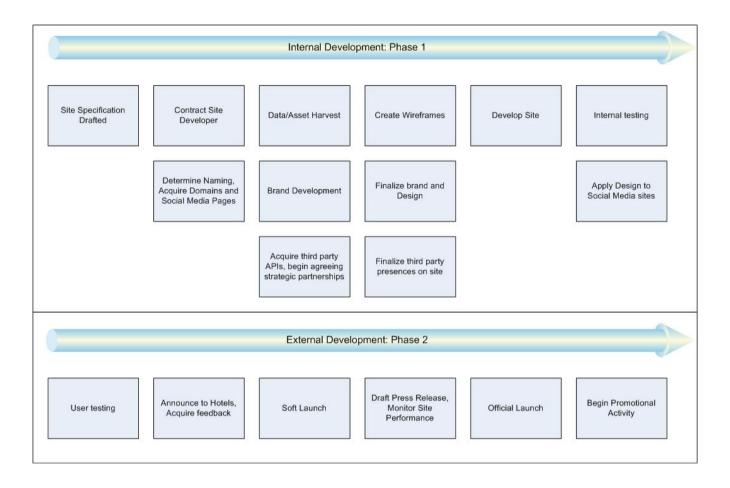
Hotelier Training

Along with marketing benefits, the group should also offer the benefit of professional development. Quality is something every aspect of the Jordanian Tourism trade is striving for, and this group must build its success through excellence and in exceeding expectations. The following hotel training initiatives should be included in a programme regularly communicated to the hotels by the Marketing Director, for which they may participate in for free as members.

Internet Marketing training sessions should also be developed and made available to member hotels, especially with regards to the use of Social Media and other new tools that are emerging.

Delivery Road Map

Below is a road map showing the recommended stages of development. Please note that this regards only technical development, and that full buy-in from all relevant parties, as well as office establishment, membership establishment, and hiring should be done prior to any digital development activity. Activities that should be performed at the same time are stacked vertically, and all activities must be performed in this order.



ANNEX: INDIVIDUAL AND COMPANIES CONSULTED

Interviews Conducted

- Nayef Al-Fayez, General Manager, JTB
- Mr. Nizar Steiteh, Managing Director, Atlas Tours
- Mohanad Malhas, Managing Director, Abercrombie & Kent Tours
- Mr. Omran Dakkak, Owner, Dakkak Tours International
- Mr. Bashara Sawalha, Owner, Tania Tours
- Seif Saudi, Managing Partner, Select Tours Jordan
- Michael Nazzal, Chairman, JHA

Abdul Hakeem Al Hindi, Managing Director, Jordan Hospitality & Tourism Education Co.

Web Companies

- Jordan Business Solutions: Raed Zarou
- Media Plus: Zaidoun Karadsheh
- Joe Ruddy: HR Quality Assurance & Industry Development USA
- Amin Ardah: Industry Training Specialist
- Ali Goussous: Community Tourism Development Specialist
- Zeid Goussous: Tourism Development. & Promotional Specialist
- Mr. Mahmoud Al Arab and Mr. Nizar Al Darbeh with JITOA
- Mona Hawa, Marketing and Tourism Director of ASEZA
- Hussein Kahil, Director of Operations & Support Wyndham Hotel Company
- Zeid Baggili: Quality Assurance & Research Specialist
- Ms. Roisin Wallace, Director of Marketing of the Manor House Hotels. Manor House Hotel and Irish Country Hotels. rwallace@manorhousehotels.com, phone interview.
- Above and Below, travel agent: Gill Balchin, Incoming Manger

Reports Read

- National Tourism Public Awareness Strategy 2007-2008, published March 2007 by Chemonics International, Inc.
- Jordan National Tourism Strategy 2004 2010, published by USAID and the AMIR Program
- Scope of Work 3140: Develop Cooperative Hotel Marketing Capacity and Jordan's Tourism Information Database, published by USAID
- VisitJordan/JTB collateral (brochures, maps, CD-ROMs).
- Ministry of Tourism
- Small Leading Hotels of the World, www.slh.com
- James Caldwell of D.K. Shifflet & Associates.
- Peter Yesawich, chairman of Y Partnership, who also consults for NYLO. Time magazine.com By Marshall A. Calder, Managing Director. Reprinted with permission from www.hotelexecutive.com
- Xola Consulting Inc., August 22 Natasha Martin, lead consultant of the study.
- The American Marketing Association (AMA)
- 2003 article by Linda P. Morton published in Public Relations Quarterly,
- The USA Today reports

Wynning Together

The power of branding – success factors









- Keeping the promise
- Consistency
- A clear image
- Evoking emotions

Top 5 in Best Global Brands 2008 Source: Interbrand



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The power of branding – what feels better?



























A brand is... a promise a feeling an experience A brand evokes emotions

